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THE TRADE OF AID



SAM KANG LI

In recent decades, foreign aid has been taken for granted in Nepal. Much ink has of course been spilt on how this fosters dependency on the part of the Nepali state and beneficiaries of aid, as well as a system that encourages inefficiency and corruption. This is in part due to the sheer volume of cash that flows into an otherwise unproductive economy. But only the most cynical would contest the fact that development

assistance has done much to improve the condition of Nepalis across the country.

One of the more fraught debates has been the one surrounding food security, and in particular the role of the World Food Programme in addressing it. With funding drying up significantly for the latter's operations in Nepal in the next couple of years, and numbers targeted set to decline from a

high of 2.4 million to 1.8 million, food security is primed to hit the headlines once more.

There will be those who will predict a catastrophe in the far west, and others who will say it is just as well. The World Food Programme itself continues to advocate for food assistance while adjusting its programs to the exigencies of funding (see *interview, p15*). But whether you believe food security is an issue in Nepal or not, the debate raises the equally important question of whether development assistance has been as effective as it should be.

This has little to do with whether development agencies have met their targets in disbursing aid where promised, and much more to do with the actual impacts on the people targeted. The fact that we debate the World Food Programme's effectiveness is encouraging, but too often media coverage peters out in a flurry of accusations that distract from the main issue of food security. The countless organisations implementing development programs produce reams of publications, but one gets the feeling that this is for the benefit of those who fund them rather than the Nepali public.

More needs to be done by development agencies and government to establish what is working and what is not – through impact evaluation studies that distinguish between causal and corollary impacts and answer the important question of what might have happened had the development intervention not taken place at all – and disseminate the results to the public. That way Nepalis can decide for themselves and move beyond generic, knee-jerk accusations. So when something as significant happens as the World Food Programme providing food assistance to half a million less Nepalis from one year to the next, we actually know what to make of it, and how to respond.

Foreign aid in Nepal is far more than a gravy train that runs in the background of our economic and social lives, or something that only poor people are dependent on. If ever one needed to be reminded, it funds about a third of our national budget – that is, the state's total expenditure – and about three fourths of the state's development expenditure. Foreign aid affects every single one of us. So it is incumbent upon us to demand to know how much foreign aid is coming in, where it is going, and what impact it has on the lives of those it is meant to improve.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

MISSING THE POINT

I wouldn't categorise Mr. Panday as a Maoist apologist but see him and other stalwarts of civil society as purposefully delusional ('Devendra Raj Pandey's example', Prashant Jha, #547). They for sure are well aware of the Maoist strategy for state capture. Baidya's is direct head on; Baburam's is indirect circular; and Prachanda's is spoils to the victor – as long as he leads them.

The problem with the civil society wallahs are that they are acting like ostriches – they are burying their head in the political quicksand thinking the problem will go away. They do not have an appetite for a fight since they know how bad the fight could become. Picking on Kingji was much easier since at least there were constraints and limits that bound the gundas of that regime. Whereas the current gundas can slit your throat, drive a powered saw into your thigh, beat you to death, and chop off your limbs all in the name of people's freedom. Oh they will free you all right – straight out of this earth into the heavens. Fifteen thousand Nepalis are enjoying that freedom right now.

As for this article by Mr Jha, what are you thinking? Like the politicians, you seem to have lost sight of the present or the future and are stuck in past glory! You could have at least written about how Mr Khanal has the potential to actively participate in the socio-political development of society like Mr Panday has done and that his forced resignation will not be wasted.

reb

- The breakdown in Nepal's governance is exemplified by this incident. If you were to believe what the Finance Secretary said it is not his reason for resignation which should worry you (he was "tired of dealing with greedy and selfish individuals who used to visit me to fulfill their personal interests rather than with programs beneficial to the larger population"), it is the immediate trigger which should cause deep concern.

He says that "a supplementary budget was being prepared at the official residence of Deputy PM and Finance Minister Adhikary and the private residences of influential individuals without even consulting the Budget Division of the ministry". What this shows is a complete breakdown of trust that the political class should have in the bureaucracy, at least its top echelons, and absolutely no regard for secrecy in the conduct of the affairs of a nation.

I guess the effort here is to divert attention away from the real issues into some useless discussion over an opportunist's escapades with different political ideologies simply because he lacked the moral fibre to stick to one single stand.

The incident also highlights how difficult governance in Nepal has become because of the acute level of rivalry between political parties which makes the whole thing a complete zero sum game. That's what the Maoists want it to be.

Soni

KEEP THEM OUT

Stop the NEA! Those morons should not be allowed to touch anything ('Power to the

people', Rubeena Mahato, #547). Why fix what's not only not broken, but is actually working so well?

hange

- I recall the community forest project was a story of great success in Nepal and we were very proud of it. There were other achievements as well like rural electrification but this stupid government has long proven that they have heads without brains. Almost 30 years ago, there was a micro-hydro project that was operating and was installed, for the first time, with major components manufactured and assembled in Nepal by Nepali engineers and technicians in Gajuri, Dhading. Where we are now? Can we still hope for a better future?

Chyangba Sherpa

SPLITSVILLE

Whether you wish or not, the Maoists will split ('Untied workers', Editorial, #547); it is inevitable not because I wish it to be so but because of the nature of that party: a party of extremism at the core converted to pluralism to adjust to present day sustainability; a party representing the poor peasants and workers, not the middle class, but with a leadership which is feudalistic/ autocratic in nature and character. The party preaches inclusiveness but the leadership is controlled by bahuns and chettris. The inherent contradiction in the party's frame and content is so high that it is not tenable to suppose that it will be resolved at trade union levels.

A fight against hypocrisy and

vulgarism will not end until and unless the leadership understands and accepts the necessity to relinquish its authoritarian nature and transform itself into a democratic party.

kamal kishor

- The need for peace came only when the Maoists came into being. Hypothetically speaking, if there were no Maoists, peace would be there. So if the Maoists fragment into pieces, peace has a greater chance.

As for the possibility of another faction becoming radical and resorting to insurgency, that would depend upon India sheltering and supporting them and weakening those who are opposed to it. Otherwise there cannot be insurgencies, or a people's movement in an India-locked country like Nepal.

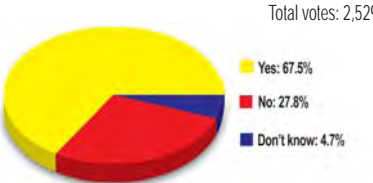
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Weekly Internet Poll # 548

Q. Do you think UCPN (Maoist) will split?



Weekly Internet Poll # 549. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think the early full budget will be 'miraculous'?

Charting the times



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Having written every week for almost four years, except for a short interlude between September and November last year, this is my final column for *Nepali Times*. Kunda Dixit, and the then editor of the paper, Anagha Neelakantan, had generously invited me to comment regularly on the evolving politics of the Tarai in the middle of 2007. I was all of 23 then, and to have a political column in the best English weekly in the country was indeed a privilege.

Prashant Jha answers his critics in his final column with Nepali Times

A lot has happened since then, and my own writing has shifted from an exclusive focus on the Madhes to the churning in Kathmandu, and the international factors that shape domestic political outcomes.

At the risk of sounding defensive, I would like to use this final column to respond to the two key criticisms, among many, that I have faced over these years – in person, letters to the editor, and comments on the web.

The first criticism is of bias– that I am a closet Maoist, though the Maoists themselves would never consider me, or those sharing my class, caste, or educational background or political leanings, as one of them.

The Maoists represent the most important and complex political movement of our time. To have a simplistic black and white view about them is just foolish. This column has criticised Maoist high-handedness and violence; held it solely responsible when CA polls were postponed in November 2007; cautioned the Maoists while in government not to be adventurous, be it on the China front or the army; blasted Baidya and company for their absurd positions; repeatedly highlighted Dahal’s weakness as a leader in not taking the bold, irreversible steps that would allay suspicions on the other side; and exposed Maoist hypocrisy on India.

But I do believe that the entry of the Maoists into the political structure has deepened Nepali democracy. The party has mobilised social groups that otherwise had little voice. It must be credited for the agenda of the republic, CA and inclusion. The 2006 People’s Movement would have been impossible without them, and democrats who pretend to have done them

a great favour forget that their own movement was confined to the vicinity of Ratna Park before the participation of the rebels.

While the Maoist model of the state is unacceptable, their presence offers us a chance to debate how to go beyond merely formalistic liberal democracy, which as we saw in the 1990s is a necessary but not sufficient system to address popular aspirations in this deeply unequal society. The last anti-Maoist coalition, conceived essentially by forces outside parliament, was a deep subversion of democratic norms – as is clear now, isolating the Maoists was neither sustainable nor intelligent as it only strengthened the dogmatists within.

But as the Maoists get ‘mainstreamed’, their degeneration has been rapid. The Maoist party is replicating the political culture and corrupt practices of the other parties, and it is slowly becoming disconnected from the changing aspirations of the new generation. The onus now is on them not to let their internal contradictions hold the country hostage, and to implement their commitments under the CPA.

The second criticism, somewhat paradoxically, is that I am an Indian ‘agent’, even though the Indians themselves think I am overly critical of their establishment. Partially, this view stems from my Madhesi background, and the fact that I

often report from Delhi.

Delhi’s hardline position on the Maoists, the designs to dissolve the CA to weaken them, the embassy’s abrasive approach, and its efforts to micro-manage parties has been counterproductive for Nepal, as well as Indian interests here. Their short-term tactical moves risk pushing Nepal into another prolonged conflict, albeit of a different kind. Nepal may be structurally dependent on India, but the resentment their recent policy line has generated across the political class will manifest itself in different ways and haunt India in years to come.

While being critical of the present Indian line, however, I do believe Nepal’s future lies in the continued integration of its citizens with the larger Indian economy. The open border largely benefits us, and in return, we should be firm on respecting India’s security interests. As someone who studied and worked in Delhi, benefitted from it, and has family across the border like many in the Madhes, I cannot but be partial to our special relationship and would like to see it deepen.

But earning brickbats is an occupational hazard while contributing to public debates. *Nepali Times* has been truly democratic, never censoring a view even if it ran contrary to its editorial line. And while I have to move on for personal reasons, I will miss this paper’s distinctive space, which gave me tremendous freedom and an opportunity to learn and grow. Thank you. 🇳🇵

THIS WEEK



Full budget

A cabinet meeting on Wednesday decided to present the full budget on 3 May. This is the first time the government will be presenting the annual budget two months ahead of the end of the fiscal year in mid-July. The government took the decision after the finance secretary tendered his resignation citing differences with the finance minister, who

wanted to present a supplementary budget at the end of the fiscal year. Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari has said the budget will focus on boosting production and productivity as this year’s budget was not spent properly.

The cabinet meeting also decided to accept credit from the Indian Government and the World Bank (WB) as well as grants provided by the European Union (EU). India has pledged a line of credit of Rs 17 billion for different projects. Rs 2.25 billion worth of credit from WB will be spent on installing transmission lines for the 35MW Kabeli hydropower project and a Rs 2 billion EU grant will be spent on reconstruction of infrastructure destroyed during the Maoist insurgency.

Rhino census

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, with technical and financial support from the National Trust for Nature Conservation and WWF-Nepal, has launched a three-week rhino census in Chitwan National Park, Bardiya National Park and Sukhlaphanta Wildlife Reserve. The previous rhino count, conducted in 2008, revealed there were 435 rhinos across the country with 408 in Chitwan. It is estimated 66 rhinos have died since, 32 due to poaching.

Undiplomatic passports

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of parliament on Friday directed the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) to start an investigation into the misuse of diplomatic passports by CA members. The CIAA has received 15 complaints about the misuse of diplomatic passports, and the PAC has urged the CIAA to look into the possible complicity of foreign ministry officials, the immigration department, and the police.

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DRSP (District Road Support Programme) has initiated Nepalgunj Green Project to plant one tree for every ticket sold in Kathmandu-Nepalgunj sector. Rs. 20 on one-way ticket on this sector will be set aside for the programme. Project areas include: Baitadi District.

Tiger Mountain Nepal has initiated Bardia Green Project to plant one tree for every ticket sold in Kathmandu-Nepalgunj sector. Rs. 20 on one-way ticket on this sector will be set aside for the programme. Project areas include: Bindrapuri Madhyawarti Samudayikban, Upavokta Samuha, (Bindrapuri Community Forest) in Bardia District.

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NEPAL TOURISM YEAR 2011

Sunny side up

Himalayan Bank has collaborated with Winrock International, the Alternative Energy Promotion Center and Janachetana Commercial Agriculture Alliance to install solar power energy production systems for the Chepang community in Silinge, Kakada VDC of Makawanpur District. This project will benefit 44 houses.

Healthy cooking

Anu Trading Links, authorised distributor of Borges Olive Oil in Nepal, conducted an awareness program on the health benefits of olive oil. There are five varieties of Borges olive oil available in the market.



Lucky pick

Shrestha International Trading Concern, authorised dealer of Mahindra Two Wheelers, has started 'Mahindra Daami' scratch and win offer whereby buyers can win between Rs 4,000 and Rs 100,000. The offer is on Mahindra Rodeo, Flyte and Duro and is available in all of its 18 showrooms.

Season's wear

Diva Boutique in Satdobato has unveiled its summer collection, Diva. The boutique showcases ladies' accessories, sarees, kurta salwar and other casual wear.

Handy package

Perfect Blends Nepal of Chaudhary Group has introduced Pride Luxury Kings in five-stick packs. The pack is priced at Rs 20.

New year gifts

CG Electronics, authorised distributor of LG products, has launched the 'LG Harsa ko Barsa 2068' scheme which guarantees prizes in the purchase of LG Products. The prizes include DishHome DTH, CG Steam Iron, LG Cooking Kit and other gifts.

Single shot

Galileo Nepal and Qatar Airways had partnered to promote Qatar's long-haul destinations, promising to award the agent with the highest number of bookings. First prize winner Aanik Blon Lama of Megabyte Travels & Tours will get a free round-trip to any Qatar Airways destination.

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MY TWO PAISA

Paavan Mathema

Right after I started this column I received several friend requests on Facebook. While I was flattered by the compliments, I was in a dilemma about whether to accept or ignore their requests. Did I really want strangers to have access to my everyday babblings, photos, or other personal details?

In real life, it's easy to separate your professional identity from your personal one. Suits for co-workers, jeans for friends. Wine at office parties, beer for hanging out. High heels at work, sandals at your buddy's place. But what to do when all friends and professional contacts can gather in the same place, at any given time of the day? Social networking sites have made it easy for people to connect with each other with a click, but have also made it difficult to maintain a distance between one's personal and professional online identities.

For a long time, I was



To friend or not to friend?

hesitant to expand the network of my friends on Facebook beyond 'real' friends. Friend request from an acquaintance at the office? Ignore. Someone I met at a business meeting just once? Ignore. I chose to keep my online connections limited to my personal contacts.

But the extended interactions that such online networking sites allow are becoming increasingly important in professional and business development. Facebook has over 600 million users, Twitter over 100 million and LinkedIn over 70 million. Having networks with even a fraction of these users can mean a lot

It's tempting to reach out to everyone you know, but keep an eye on the boundaries you set

if you want to promote your company, your product, an event you are organising, or even just yourself.

Today, advertising on a social networking site has become an essential part of a product marketing strategy. Such sites offer real-time social networks, which means that you can reach your audience

quickly and promote your product. The fantastic part of networking is that your reach is unlimited, yet you can add a personal touch. What you put out in your primary circle has a snowballing effect, and can be shared or retweeted to a million others. The impact is much more than with traditional promotion media.

These networks also come in handy if you are looking for a job or offering one. In fact, networking sites are now listed alongside job search sites. Relationships that you make with business acquaintances online can have a profitable impact on future dealings. Making your online presence felt

can be an advantage for your professional development. And all this...for free!

So does this mean you add everyone and accept every other friend request? You might want to be able to complain about your work on Facebook or MySpace without your 'friended' boss raising an eyebrow, or swear about a meeting gone badly without the client, who may follow you on Twitter, reading it.

The answer is discretion – in terms of who you add to your networks, how you express yourself on your networks, and barring this, using privacy settings that limit what your contacts are able to access. Certain sites understand the difference between their personal and commercial utility and enable users to create secondary pages, specifically for business purposes. There are also sites that are more suited for connecting business professionals, such as LinkedIn.

Social networking sites are now a vital part of our online experience. For most, it is the second site they login to after checking their email. Such sites present an opportunity to reach out to an unlimited number of people. If this reach can be used for business advantages, then why not?

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Amidst the gloom



MY TAKE
Damakant Jayshi

Tough tasks lie ahead for constitution writing, so Dahal's continued leadership of the sub-committee debating issues is important

Even amidst the growing gloom and looming uncertainty, there was something to cheer this week. First, the government shelved its plan to present a supplementary budget, which would simply have bled the exchequer dry. It would have been very difficult to justify another budget near the end of the fiscal year from a UML-led government to follow on from the existing budget, also unveiled by a UML-led government.

The second bright spot is the decision of Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal to continue to head the sub-committee of the Constitutional Committee of the Constituent Assembly (CA), tasked with narrowing down differences among

the political parties on the contents of the new constitution. Pressed by party hardliners, he had said he would not continue a few days ago, proposing Vice Chairman Narayan Kaji Shrestha as a replacement.

Such a move would have effectively reduced the sub-committee to an ineffectual body, like so many that we already have. An earlier taskforce headed by Dahal and manned by the leaders of NC, UML, Madhesi and other small parties had settled over 100 disputes, almost all of which were relatively minor. Most of these settled disputes cropped up just because the small parties in the various thematic committees of the CA wanted to make their

presence felt.

One of the major differences – over the appointment of the chief justice of the Supreme Court – has been nearly sorted out. The independence of the judiciary hinges on how the chief justice is appointed. Through the taskforce and sub-committee, it was finally agreed to have the chief justice appointed by a constitutional committee headed by the executive head (of the government).

However, two major disputes are yet to be resolved and they have the potential to derail constitution-writing as well as the peace process – the form of governance, and the shape and nature of the new Nepali state (that is,

what kind and how many federating states we will have).

The bigger political parties have so far not shown any sign of compromising. The Maoists want a directly elected president, UML has proposed a directly elected prime minister, while NC is for the continuation of the existing Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, wherein a prime minister is elected by parliament and is answerable to it.

Of course, this is an area where NC can compromise if there are guaranteed safeguards against authoritarian tendencies. This is not just a concern for NC, of course; ordinary citizens will want to be reassured that the form of governance chosen will help usher in good governance and make the state accessible to the people, rather than open the door to an authoritarian or totalitarian regime.

Federalism is a trickier issue. In order to sound revolutionary and populist, political parties went for federalism. The Maoists rue this in private, saying they had not envisioned state demarcation along ethno-lingual lines, and UML feels the same way. Even the Madhesi parties acknowledge in private that an autonomous 'ek Madhes, ek pradesh' (a single autonomous Madhes state) is not possible.

But the risks of political fallout have made them reluctant to admit this and deal with this sensitive subject in a pragmatic manner. There never was a serious, nationwide debate about whether or not we needed federalism or whether we were confusing decentralisation (of power and resources) with federalism. Now even those who rushed to welcome federalism in haste are agast at the turn of events.

We are past the debate over whether or not we need to evolve into a federation. Managing the aspirations of different communities who see a federal state as the only guarantor of their identities will be a tough task. Having federal states demarcated on the basis of true decentralisation (look at India, which is a federation only in name), resources, and economic viability is the best possible outcome we can hope for now.

That is where the Dahal-led sub-committee can play a big role. So his decision to continue as its head needs to be applauded. damakant@gmail.com





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Ama Ghar

TEXT & PHOTOS by NEIL DIXIT

Bonnie Ellison, Country Director of Ama Ghar, remembers the day the children arrived in Godavari after a long bus ride from Pyuthan. “They were scared and didn’t know what to do. But three of the older girls, Rupmala, Bindu and Sharada, quickly took charge. Without them, this place wouldn’t be what it is today,” she says.

Such a family-oriented atmosphere, reminiscent of home, was always the intent of co-founder Shrawan Nepali. During his adolescence, Nepali stayed at the all-boys Paropakar orphanage, one of the oldest in Nepal. His bond with Ama Tika Basnet there inspired him to set up the orphanage with her and Shekhar Silwal. “She was the closest person I had to a mother figure growing up. She changed my life, and helped me become the No.1 student in class, from being the worst,” he recalls.

With the support of US-based NGO Ama Foundation, Nepali and his partners opened Ama Ghar’s doors in 2001. Today, it houses 39 cheerful children, who are getting the benefit of a loving home and a top-rate education. But is it sustainable?

“We’re trying to find ways to become more self-sufficient,” explains Ellison. Indeed, Ama Ghar is looking for ways to generate income through the children’s talents. “They’re all good artists! So why can’t they sell art?” Why not indeed. The spirit of the inhabitants of Ama Ghar is such that you can simply sense that their prospects are bright, if only because the children are ready to take their future into their own hands. 📷

www.ama-foundation.org



Graduating from home

“I want to be a surgeon,” she says shyly, yet with undeniable determination. Sharada has spent 8 years at Ama Ghar, and is unequivocal about her experience. “Ama Ghar changed my life; it made me more responsible. I want to set a good example for everyone else,” she says.

Currently in the third year of her MBBS degree and at the top of her class, Sharada has definitely set the bar high. Getting to the top has not been easy, however. “Class 11 was challenging, as I had to switch from Nepali to English medium; I even failed physics but that didn’t discourage me, and Bonnie stood by me,” she says. “She’s been an inspiration for me and for everyone else.” Sharada would do well to remember what an inspiration she is proving to be for the rest of her family at Ama Ghar.



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www.npi-nepal.com

EVENTS



Kathmandu, kathmandu, works of 20 contemporary Nepali photographers. Till 13 April, 12pm to 7pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, 5013501

Brick by Brick, a multimedia event to promote clean and green bricks, with photo exhibition by Achinto, Nepal's first flashmob; an ephemeral event called the 'Domino Effect'; live music; and a contemporary art performance by Karl Knapp. 9 April, 4pm onwards. Jawalakhel Football Ground, free entry, www.brickclean.net



Rare Asian Textiles, from the private collection of Barbara Adams and **Female Substantive**, paintings by Ilsa Brittain. 8 to 22 April, 5.30pm on inauguration day, gallery hours: 11am to 6pm, Saturday: 12pm to 4pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal, 4218048



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Last week of Lives and Faces, pictures from the Maoist insurgency in India by Mustafa Quraishi. Till 17 April, 11am to 4pm, closed on Tuesdays, Shanti Sangrahalaya, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan Dhoka, 5549948

Watercolour paintings of unique and exquisite orchids, by Hemlata Pradhan. Till 1 May, Serindia Gallery, O.P. Garden, Soi Charoenkrung 36, Charoenkrung Road, Bangkok, 0223 6410, serindiagallery@gmail.com

Teen Art Competition, organised by AmarJyoti Foundation. 16 April, Trikuti Colony, Battisputali, 4482868, 9851023958

Call for entries for Film Southasia, a festival of South Asian documentaries. 29 September to 2 October, early submission deadline: 31 May 2011, final submission deadline (for films made after April 2010): 31 June 2011, Film Southasia Secretariat, Patan Dhoka, 5552141, www.filmsouthasia.org, fsa@filmsouthasia.org



Cine saptaha, screening of two short films, **Generation zed** and **Between the Lines** by young filmmakers. 8 to 14 April, 4.30pm, Docskool Film Centre, Gaurighat, Tickets: Rs 30, booking at docskoolnepal@gmail.com

MUSIC

Yalamaya Classic, soulful classical music. 15 April, 5pm onwards, Pattangini (Open Area), Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, free entrance



Kailash Kher live in Kathmandu, popular and sufi songs by the noted Indian singer. 13 April, 6pm onwards, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, tickets: Rs 5,000 and Rs 2,000



1974 AD live in concert, in support of the global campaign **Everyone** to save the lives of newborns. 9 April, 6pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 9841320007, tickets: Rs 500

DINING

La Dolce Vita, known for its delicious Italian food and excellent service, this restaurant is covered in Lonely Planet's list of places to visit in Kathmandu. *Thamel*

Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar, the outdoor dining area has a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. *Thamel*



Surya Nepal Masters 2011
Gokarna Forest Resort • April 13-17, 2011

Let's playoff

Busy days are in the offing for golfers with Surya Nepal Masters 2011 just round the corner. The 18th edition of Surya Nepal Masters is scheduled to be held from 13-17 April at Gokarna Forest Resort. Surya Nepal Masters has its roots in 1993 when it began as the Surya Nepal Invitation Open Golf Championship. Today the competition is putting Nepal on the map in the international golfing arena. It is the only international-class golf tournament here and it is co-sanctioned by the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), in partnership with the Nepal Professional Golf Association (NPGA). The winner will take home prize money of Rs 4 million, the highest purse in the country. Standard Chartered Bank is the sponsor for the Pro Am event and Nepal Tourism Board is the event partner of Surya Nepal Masters 2011.



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Yin Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Get a little spice in your life with their pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, fall into the safety net of their western dishes. *Thamel*

Bhojan Griha, traditional Nepali restaurant that serves up great local food with folk music and dance. *Dillibajar*

Ideal for family lunches and get togethers. *Jhamsikhel*

The Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, enjoy a pleasant BBQ lunch in the ambient settings of The Garden of Dreams. *Every Sunday, 12pm to 3pm, Kaiser Mahal, Thamel, Rs 1,300 per person, 4425341*



Aalishan, serves a mix of both Indian and Chinese cuisines. *Jawalakhel (near the roundabout)*



Buddha Bar, an establishment since the days of the hippies, Buddha Bar offers a warm and cozy space for intimate conversations over a large selection of drinks. *Thamel*



Roadhouse Café, serves pizzas cooked to perfection in wood-fired ovens. Health-conscious diners have an alternative in the caesar salad, garnished with the freshest of ingredients. *Jhamsikhel*

Cinnamon Grill Lounge, provides excellent Mexican and continental food, with live music every Saturday.

GETAWAYS



Shivapuri Heights Cottage, ideal escape from the hustle of the city, at the foothills of Shivapuri National Park. *Bansbari, 9851012245, info@shivapuricottage.com*

Fulbari's domestic tourism promotion package, includes 2 Nights/ 3 Days deluxe accommodation, bed and breakfast, one special dinner, welcome drinks and free tennis, gym and swimming pool facilities at Rs 6,500 nett per person. *The Fulbari Resort & Spa, Pokhara, 4461918, 4462248*



SOMEPLACE ELSE



JALAN JALAN

Back to the outskirts of Jhamel to a restaurant that preceded it. Jalan Jalan has been around for a while, surviving a change of management while boosting its prices somewhat. But it still manages to serve up a whole range of cuisines in a quiet, cool setting with a view of the Valley.


For a hot summer's afternoon, then, I'd recommend the Lemon and Mint Tea. A wonderfully refreshing combination – why hasn't anyone else thought of it, just sticking to one or the other? And continuing with the summery theme, a Teriyaki Beef Salad hits the spot. The portion and presentation impressed, though perhaps they could have been more generous with the dressing. The steamed Vietnamese Spring Rolls in rice paper, too, were a far cry from the deep-fried fiends beloved of

your neighbourhood joints. Crunchy and encouragingly healthy (in stark contrast to the curiously red Malay Fried Potatoes), they must have been disappointed with the bland dip they were offered.

When it comes to mains, though, Jalan Jalan is fulsome enough. I've found its sauces and gravies to be rich in taste, and more importantly, variable. Most of the dishes I've tried here have been well presented and imaginatively put together. The Kewebcut Chicken stuffed with cottage cheese, olives et al and the Lemon Chicken with Walnut are cases in point, and the Pork Coins with Honey pay you back for what you shell out.

So now for something completely different, I thought, as we ordered the Mole Poblano, waving away the warnings of the waiter that this was 'halka guliyo'. They met the challenge

superbly, even if the rich sauce was (probably for my sake) not as chocolatey as the Mexican original. There were even hints of Rogan Josh in its tomato tang!

Jalan didn't quite finish the job. The Apple and Walnut Tart seemed tired (or simply old), relying on a scoop of vanilla ice-cream to get through the day. Next time I'll just have the ice-cream.  *Nepali Kukur*

Instead of heading down the driveway to Summit Hotel, turn your back on it. Jalan Jalan awaits.

Space	★★★★★
Bread 'n water	★★★★★
Service	★★★★★
Deal-icious	★★★★★
Rep-eat?	★★★★★



GUFFADI

S'long

British Gurkhas ko size pani ghatney bhayo! The UK Ministry of Defense plans to cut 700 soldiers from the Gurkha unit rey! Them goras still have not compensated them 200,000+ Gurkhas who fought during the WWI and WWII kyaaruh! I guess the British don't need the Gurkhas hola...they blame them budget sudget kya! I think if they got rid of them Queen Sween then they can save some money ni!

Baroo...tyo rajkumar William ko biha ma samosa ruh chiya matrai diye hooncha ni! I hope our Gurkhas will not offer Prince Harry mutton curry and them kukhuri gift sift if he ever goes back to Afghanistan! Janoo cha bhaney aah-fai ja moro!

And our traffic police have decided to invite celebrities rey...to give them traffic-wallahs some pep talk and also share their experiences about how they were treated (badly) by them traffic-wallahs!

Once, I was coming back from Durbarmarg...the police stopped the taxi and checked my bag sag and then began asking them funny questions! "Kaha bata aako?" "Durbarmarg baatuh..."



"Ye... Raja lai bheta-naw gaako?" I think somebody forgot to tell him that Gyanu Uncle doesn't live in Narayanhiti anymore and he is no longer them King Singh kya! "Ani kaha jaa-naw laako?" "Ghar!" "Kaha ho ghar?" I think these guys never watched them 'CID' on Sony TV hola ni! This (Nepal police ko Q&A) is probably worse than them Amriki Embassy ko question haroo kya! "Do you or have you or will you...ever be involved in them tero-ris organisation?"

Once upon a tyam in Amrika, a Nepali boy jasko last name chahi Khanal was picked up by them FBI folks...yo tyo plane slane lay tower haney ko bela ko katha ho! Ani FBI ko agent dumb-ass asked him...'Have you met Bin Laden?' or 'Do you have any anti-Amriki bichar-dhara?'...poor Khanal!

Nowadays...I just give them answers even before they open their filthy mouth south! "My name is Guffadi. I am the chairperson of Guffadi Youth Club. I live in ***** and I am going home from work. Yes I know...it's 2 in the morning (and I open my bag...show them my laptop as if I am working for some IT company!)"

It takes only two minutes...(Maggi!) and then they just stare at me. Laamo kapal pani chaina, mundra pani chaina...lau janoos janoos! As if I really want to stay there and ask for them soorti and a quarter of 'Virgin Whisky'...hehe!

India has won them Cricket World Cup natak...and this is probably the best tyam to ask them Desi for free electricity, subsidised fuel and food sood kya! Bhancha ni...when them folks are drunk then it's easy to get their junk from the trunk...haha! Sorry...that sounds like some shitty hip hop lyrics!

Anyways...congratulations to our Desi bhais....hope them betting wallahs made a killing! According to them Indian dailies, betting nai 50,000 crores ko bhayo rey! I lost my bet set... now I have to buy my saathi...'tandoori chicken' ruh naan saan! Gheech mora...jati gheech-noo cha!

And our great comrade, Prachandoni (Indian team captain Dhoni jastai kya!) called them Desi raj-doot, Mr. Sood rey! 'Bhai Saheb..congrats...' and the Desi ambassador replied... "if your cadres had waved them Indian flags instead of them black ones then you would have probably been the prime-monster again ni"

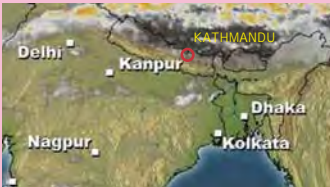
Dear Saathi bhai, didi bahinis and our stupid netas and neti-nis! I have decided to stop writing them blog slog ma 'jpt' guff...from today onwards...I will be only writing them poem soem and mero original geet haroo ko lyrics!

S'Long, Farewell...I am moving to Zimbabwe...my flight's on Saturday...I hope Mugabe has better internet connection sonnection...haha! 🇿🇼



WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

In recent years spring has become synonymous with water scarcity caused by low rainfall, rising mercury levels and dried up sources. This is also the time of isolated rains, turbulent winds and thunderstorms. However, satellite pictures from Thursday afternoon show a fresh westerly jet stream carrying sustained streams of clouds moving towards Nepal and its surrounds. They are likely to produce lightning and a few isolated showers over the country. Expect sunny intervals, clear nights and cool mornings through the weekend.



FRI	SAT	SUN
28-10	26-09	27-08



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

MEASURING UP: As the date for the Seto Machhindranath Jatra nears, craftsmen begin the construction of the chariot in Darbar Marg.

Messner: the dog in the night-time



An epochal mountaineering feat was achieved by the Italian Reinhold Messner in 1978, when together with Peter Haebler of Austria, he climbed Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen. Although the debate about the potentially detrimental health impact of such climbs on the brain rages on, it is clear that their stellar accomplishment earned them a special place in the annals of climbing.

Messner continued to break records by becoming the first person to successfully make the first solo ascent of Mount Everest without a support team, an established camp, or prepared caches in 1980. On 16 August, as his friend Nena Holguin waited for him at the base of the North Col on the Tibetan side, he started out on his climb wearing jogging shoes, and reached the Col. At 5am on 17

August, he set off on his epic climb from the foot of the Col. He fell into a crevasse but extricated himself and slept in a small bivouac tent that night; he then staggered on, battling snowfall and poor visibility to finally reach the peak the next day.

Messner accomplished in three days what had taken many other climbers several weeks. By this time in Messner's career, he had climbed five 8000m peaks without oxygen. He ultimately became the first person to climb all 14 of the 8000m peaks.

What makes it physiologically possible for elite climbers like Messner to accomplish these difficult climbs? Is it just drive and ambition or are there important physiological factors? To answer this question, Dr Oscar Olez, Messner's personal physician from Switzerland, carried out extensive examinations on six elite altitude climbers. Much to his surprise, he found that these climbers had nothing unusual in their physical make-up. In fact exercise testing parameters revealed that these climbers' performances were far below those of world-class long-distance runners.



John West, the famous physiologist, likes to say that this 'unremarkableness' is reminiscent of the curious incident of the dog in the night-time in Sherlock Holmes' 'Silver Blaze'. When Holmes draws Watson's attention to "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time", Watson replies, "The dog did nothing in the night-time." Holmes then says, "That was the curious incident." 🇬🇧



BIKRAM RAI

PITTY PAT PUNCHES: A South Korean theatre group, Jeendong, performs Do it now! at Rastriya Nach Ghar on Wednesday. Directed by Park Jong Woo, the play was performed in Nepali.



BIKRAM RAI

MY TURN: Voters line up outside Nepal Chamber of Commerce in Kantipath on Wednesday to elect new members for the Chamber's working committee.

Won't take it lying down



GUEST COLUMN
Anurag Acharya

It was the festival season and I was travelling in a crowded bus from Dharan to Biratnagar. Two rows ahead of me, a middle-aged man was wiping his forehead with a gamchha that was already soaked in his sweat. Just then a brightly dressed woman chewing gum entered the bus, took one look inside, and turned to leave.

The conductor tried to convince her not to go, saying "seat milauchhu ni didi, aunu na". She followed the conductor, who walked up to the man with the gamchha and said, "Oh bhaiya, uth ta, didi lai basna de". The man looked up and quietly gave up his seat. She thanked the conductor, who was evidently quite flattered. The dejected look on the man's face went unnoticed by the other passengers. A thought occurred to me then: what if some day a Madhesi passenger refuses to give up his seat?

Five years later, Bishendra Pashwan and Sadrul Miya threw a chair out of the fourth floor window of the building where a Constitutional Committee meeting was underway. This is not about whether or not such conduct was becoming of a CA member. What I am worried about is the depoliticisation of the incident, which has led to the downplaying of the uncomfortable questions it raised.

Madhesi Tarai Dalits, ethnic minorities, and Muslims make up about 19 per cent of Nepal's total population. According to the UN's 2009 Human Development Report, Madhesi Tarai Dalits have a life expectancy of 61, adult literacy of 27 per cent and annual per capita income of US\$743. Tarai Madhesi Janjatis live an average of 61.55 years, have a literacy rate of 48 per cent and a per capita income of US\$1,224. Muslims live for 61 years, have a literacy rate of 30 per cent and a per capita income of US\$890. These three groups occupy the bottom three positions of Nepal's human development ranking.

We may say this is due to regional disparity, and that the Tarai Madhesi population will benefit automatically once state restructuring leads to decentralised governance. But hang on, take a look at this: Tarai Madhes Brahmins and Chhetris live for 64 years, have a literacy rate of 84 per cent and earn US\$2,333. Is this regional disparity or systematic socio-economic marginalisation? Anyone would be outraged by this



RSS

disparity, especially if you are Bishendra Pashwan and Sadrul Miya, who carry the huge expectations of one fifth of the country but are told that there are more urgent matters to discuss than this.

The wretched of this land have suffered enough, been humiliated enough, and protested more than enough. The lawmakers in

the constitution drafting committees, including the Constitutional Committee, need to understand that the days of 'bhaiyas' conceding their rightful space to daju-bhais are over, whether in a public bus or a public debate.

Institutionally, the socio-economic mosaic of the nation needs to change to

Why Bishendra Pashwan ended up throwing a chair out of the window

include hitherto marginalised aspirations. But the plight of Madhesi Dalits, Janjatis and Muslims is not just political and economic. Nepal hasn't completely emerged out of feudalism and residual racism. So the demand for an inclusive Nepal cannot be met with a few constitutional gestures. It needs an equally progressive and sensitive outlook on a personal level, which the Constitutional Committee members clearly failed to demonstrate.

Such fault lines run

deep, from the parliamentary secretariat building to rented apartments and buildings, classrooms, hostels, offices and every other public space. Any attempt to address these resentments has to go beyond the legal and challenge the socially accepted myth of 'Nepali nationalism' that pits the fair-skinned, Nepali-speaking Indo-Aryan and Khas identity against the dark-skinned Awadhi, Bhojpuri and Maithili speaking Madhesis. It is Dhaka topi and daura versus gamchha and dhoti.

This cannot be just a constitutional project. It has to be a political and cultural exercise as well, where all sections of society including the so-called intellectuals engage on a personal level to create a heterogeneous Nepali identity that is culturally diverse and politically vibrant. Only then will the seed of the new constitution bear the fruit of an inclusive democracy that is accessible to all citizens. 🇳🇵

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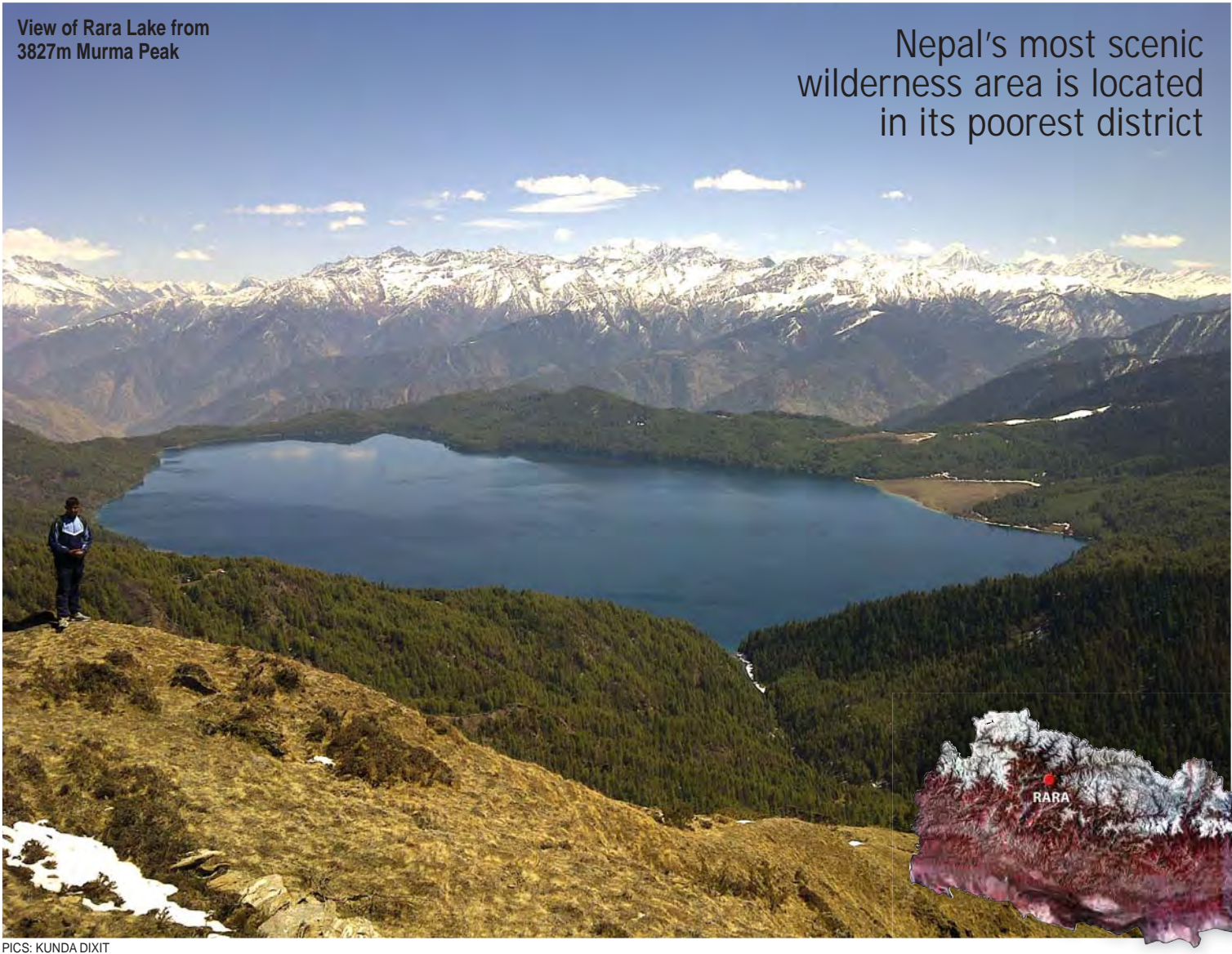
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Protecting Rara from



PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

KUNDA DIXIT in MUGU

After a steep climb through a scented pine forest, suddenly through the curtain of lichen you see the sun flashing on the lake's ripples. On the pebbled shore of Rara, we soak in the sight of the inky blue water reflecting the snowy mountains and the sky beyond. Words fail you, and you are reduced to clichés: picturesque, magnificent, breath-taking.

Nepal's largest lake is located in its poorest and most remote district. A new road is snaking up the ridges and has nearly reached Rara's eastern shore. At the airfield at Talcha, excavators snarl as they claw into the mountainside to lengthen the runway.

Rara's serenity and splendour is so lovely it makes your heart ache to think how

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प्राप्त गरेको PNR तथा तपाईंको मोबाइल नम्बरसहितको विवरण नजिकको ट्रामल एजेन्स वा बुद्ध एयरको सेल्स काउण्टरबाट ४५ मिनेटभित्र टिकट लिई सक्नुपर्नेछ ।

सेक्टर कोडहरू

Kathmandu	ktm	Biratnagar	bir
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Pokhara	pkp	Bhairahawa	bwa
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एयरको उपलब्ध मोबाइल नम्बर
नेपाली भाषाबाट मात्र लागू हुनेछ

the future

vulnerable it has become. As the sound of diesel engines gets closer, you wonder how long this wilderness will remain so.

The juniper tree under which, in 1964, King Mahendra gave orders to protect the lake, still stands on Mili Chaur. Rara was declared a national park in 1975 after more than 1,500 households were translocated to the Tarai. In 2007, the lake was declared a Ramsar Site, a wetland of international importance.

The lake has three endemic species of trout found nowhere else in the world. Nearly 270 out of the 867 species of birds found in Nepal nest here. The pine, juniper and spruce forests are a treasure trove for medicinal herbs, and abound in musk deer, red panda and mountain goats.

“If Mahendra hadn’t done it, today buffalos would be wallowing in the lake, there would be no fish left, the forest would be gone, and the lake would be filled with instant noodle wrappings,” says Durga Poudel, warden of

Rara National Park.

Mugu has the lowest life expectancy, the lowest adult literacy rate, and one of the worst infant and maternal mortality rates of Nepal’s 75 districts. The main challenge for conservationists is to reconcile the district’s abject poverty with the need to protect Rara’s nature.

In Mugu’s district capital of Gamgadi, CDO Rajesh Poudel, feels Rara’s tourism potential could lift the district’s living standards. “The national park should also be open to the idea of allowing tourism,” he says. There is a plan to take a motorable road through the park to create ‘tourism infrastructure’. The local leaders of the three main parties are mostly civil contractors, and are pushing strongly for the road.

There is much anticipation in Mugu surrounding the arrival of the Karnali Highway from Jumla next year. “Rice will be cheaper because it won’t have to be flown in, and better access will mean better education and health care,” says Bhim Thapa of the Nepal Food Corporation.

But on the tranquil shores of the lake itself, where the only sound is the whisper of the wind in the pines, warden Durga Poudel looks out at a flock of migratory birds making a brief stopover before heading off to Tibet, and worries aloud about how long Rara can retain its wilderness.

“Why should people come here if there are tractors rattling along?” he asks. “If the politicians decide to build a road through the park, we won’t have a say, and it’ll all be finished.”

During the war, the army abandoned all seven of its ranger posts. Poaching of red panda and musk deer went up, as did illegal fishing and logging. Poudel and the army are working to reinstate three of the check-posts this year.

At Lamachaur, amidst the ruins of an army post that was bombed by the Maoists, the chairman of the buffer zone committee, Laba Bahadur Rokaya shrugs and says: “It’s so cold, you have to let people get firewood. If you don’t they threaten you with an axe.”


The alternative is for the community forests in the buffer zone to collect deadwood and fodder, but the treeline of locally managed forests is receding.


The only way to protect Rara from the future, say conservationists, will be to

encourage limited high-value tourism that provides local employment through services, farm products and handicrafts.

“Socially responsible eco-tourism that values nature is the only way to go,” says Hum Gurung of Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN). “Mass tourism will kill Rara.”

The factors keeping Mugu poor are decades of neglect by faraway Kathmandu, and the lack

of unity and accountability of its local leaders. Unless these structural problems are addressed, it is clear that neither tourism nor the road will be able to lift the people of Mugu out of poverty. 

Picture Gallery of Rara: [nepalitimes.com](#)
More reading:
Resplendent and remote Rara, #44
Jewel of the west, #322
More rah-rah for Rara, # 524 


Warden for life

When he retires in two years, Durga Poudel will be one of the last of Nepal’s pioneering conservationists.

In a career spanning 30 years, Poudel served as the first warden of Sagarmatha National Park in 1976, oversaw the creation of Dhorpatan Reserve, helped set up the unique eco-tourism project in Langtang, was in Kosi Tappu, Chitwan, and Bardiya, and did the original survey for Makalu Barun.

“Bardiya was the most challenging,” says the soft-spoken Poudel, who was detained by the rebel army there during the conflict. “If it hadn’t been for the support of the local people who saved me, I wouldn’t be here today.”

Poudel says the war and the 2006 Ghunsa helicopter crash set the country’s conservation movement back 20 years. “We are back to square one in terms of poaching,” he says, “and political protection of poachers was never as bad as it is now.” He says the key ingredient in protecting Nepal’s parks now is for the wardens and the army to work closely together, as in Rara.







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Hindi hangama

Navin Jha in
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30 March-13 April

हिमाल

“We have decided to launch an awareness campaign nationwide to enlist the Hindi language, which unites the Madhes region, as a mother tongue or at least a second language in Census 2011.” This decision was taken by the Rajendra Mahato-led Sadbhavana Party in December last year.

All Madhesi parties have noted in their party manifestos that Hindi should be included as a mother tongue. TMLP leader Jitendra Sonal says, “Madhesi parties have already launched awareness campaigns for Hindi to be enlisted as a mother tongue.”

Census 2011, scheduled to begin from the second week of June, is the first census since the country became a federal democratic republic. The census is crucial as it will create the basis for state restructuring. If the Madhesi parties’ strategy works, other native languages such as Maithili, Bhojpuri, Abadhi, and Tharu, among others, will be sidelined.

According to Census 2001, Maithali is spoken by 12.3 per cent of the total population followed by Bhojpuri at 7.53 per cent, Tharu at 5.86 per cent and Abadhi at 2.47 per cent while the Hindi-speaking population accounts for only 0.47 per cent. The majority of the people whose mother tongue is not Hindi live in the Tarai while Hindi-speaking people are scattered across 74 districts, barring Humla.

Academic Ramesh Ranjan Jha says a forceful induction of an external language will wipe out native languages. “Attempts are being made to destroy the identity and potential of the Madhes by planting a seed of political discord through language,” he says.

UML leader Rampriti Paswan says the engagement of state agencies as well as non-governmental organisations to use the census to achieve the vested interests of political parties is unfortunate. However, spokesperson of Sadbhavana Party Ram Naresh Ray says the campaign was launched to pre-empt flaws in enlisting languages that are spoken in the region. “Mother tongues have their own importance but our effort is to make Hindi the language of communication in the Madhes region,” he says.



Australian Government



Australia Awards

DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

Development Awards: Announcement for the intake commencing in academic year 2012

Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) & Australian Leadership Awards Scholarships (ALAS)

The overarching goals of Australia's Development Awards are: to develop capacity and leadership skills so that individuals can contribute to development in their home country; and to build people-to-people linkages at the individual, institutional and country levels. Development Awards include Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) and Australian Leadership Award Scholarships (ALAS).

ADS in Nepal are available in two categories. Public sector category (75% - government employees) and open category (25%) for Masters and PhD level of study in bilaterally agreed priority sectors. The scholarships aim to strengthen human resource capacity and to contribute to improved service delivery and development outcomes in Nepal.

ALAS are academically prestigious awards offered to high achieving candidates. ALAS is an open scheme. Candidates from government as well as private sectors are eligible to apply. To be successful, candidates must have the potential to assume leadership roles that can influence social and economic policy reform, development and governance in their home countries and the region. ALAS are available for Masters and PhD studies.

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) is pleased to invite applications for the 2012 intake.

Priority Sectors:

ADS

- Health, Education, Economics, Environment (including Climate Change, Water and Sanitation), Gender & inclusion, including disability, Public Policy / Administration / Financial Management, Agriculture / Forestry (including livelihood and food security), Law (including human rights)
- Business Administration (for Government public servants only)

ALAS

Disability, Disaster risk reduction, Economic growth, Education, Environment, Food security, Gender equality, Governance, Health, HIV/AIDS, Pandemics, Human rights, Infrastructure, Regional stability, Rural development, Water and sanitation

To ensure equity and broad participation, AusAID encourages women, people with disability, ethnic minorities, people living in rural areas and members of socio-economically disadvantaged groups to apply.

Eligibility requirements

Applicants for both ADS and ALAS must:

1. be a citizen of Nepal and be residing in Nepal;
2. have a minimum academic IELTS overall score of 6.5 or above (with no individual band less than 6) or a TOEFL paper-based test score of at least 580, or a TOEFL Internet-based score of at least 92. IELTS or TOEFL test must have been completed no earlier than 31 August 2009;
3. have completed with good grades a tertiary level qualification at least equivalent to an Australian Bachelor degree;
4. have at least three years' work experience relevant to a nominated field of study;
5. not already be following a course of study at a university abroad;
6. not have held a scholarship for study outside Nepal in the 24 months preceding the application;
7. not be a permanent resident or have applied or in the process of applying for permanent residency in Australia;
8. not be married, or engaged to be married to a person who holds or who is eligible to hold Australian or New Zealand citizenship or permanent residence status.

In addition, applicants for Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) must be less than 45 years of age on 1 January of the year of the application. Applicants from the public sector for ADS will require nomination from the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Successful candidates will commence studies at an Australian institution from January 2012. Recipients of scholarships are required to return to Nepal for two years after completing their studies. They should also be willing to actively participate in the Australia Awards alumni program.

To Apply:

Applications are open from 11 March 2011 and close on 31 May 2011.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply online at <https://oasis.aisaid.gov.au>. Applicants should first read the country profile, applicant handbooks and instructions on how to apply at www.southasiascholarship.org.

Please contact the South Asia Scholarships Program (SASP) Office if you require assistance. Hard copy applications will also be available if required from the SASP office and will need to be submitted by 5pm 31 May 2011 by post to:

South Asia Scholarships Program (SASP)
GPO Box - 8975, EPC - 2359
Thadodhunga, Dhobighat, Patan – Kathmandu / Nepal

Further information:

For more information or to access a hard copy application form, please visit www.southasiascholarship.org
Email: info@southasiascholarship.org
Telephone: (977) 1 5520345
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See also www.aisaid.gov.au/scholar or www.australiaawards.gov.au

Fund insecurity

Nicole Menage took over as the World Food Programme's Country Representative in Nepal last autumn, and promptly found herself in the middle of a funding crunch. She spoke to *Nepali Times* about the impact this is likely to have on the millions who receive assistance from the organisation.

Nepali Times: What is the current status of WFP operations in Nepal?
Nicole Menage: Our main thrust focuses on providing food assistance to populations most vulnerable to food insecurity in the mid and far western hills and mountains. We also provide food assistance to 70,000 Bhutanese refugees, and our Country Programme targets maternal and child health, as well as schoolchildren.

What changes are forthcoming?
 From January 2011 on, all our programmes have been tapered down. While we targeted 2.4 million people last year, our new target is 1.8 million. But our strategy is also slightly different from the immediate post-conflict approach.

Why are you scaling down?
 It's partly because of funding constraints linked to the global recession, but also because some people have moved out of chronic food insecurity. During the period of conflict and immediately after there were many short-term interventions as well as programs that aimed to help people develop their assets. Now the focus is more on the latter. We're also interested in dissecting the sources of the food insecurity problem so people can move out of that.

What impact will this have on beneficiaries?
 The dilemma is that it often costs the most to reach those communities that most need our help. We have to make decisions about how best to help people living in inaccessible areas like Dolpa, Mugu, and Humla. Most likely we'll have to stop expensive helicopter operations. But we don't want to desert these people, so we are trying to work with government to see what we can do. If we can't use helicopters, we'll use roads, porters, animals, whatever is available.

Could this be post-conflict donor fatigue?
 There's certainly more emergency aid that can be tapped in the post-conflict period. There's still tremendous need in some regions but Nepal's 'silent emergency' doesn't fall into the traditional humanitarian aid slot. Both donors and the government are keen to focus on more developmental rather than humanitarian assistance.

Some accuse WFP of creating dependency.
 There are a few misconceptions here. WFP increases its operations not arbitrarily, but in response to specific shocks. Similarly, when decisions are made to scale down programs, we make sure we taper them down gradually, not suddenly. We make educated forecasts of the situation. Also, our food assistance is meant to supplement the local diet during the three or four months of the lean

season, not replace it. The biggest impact is in reducing outmigration so the men will stay and cultivate their land, and use the safety net we provide with other programs to move out of chronic poverty. So the idea that communities will stop growing barley and millet because they have acquired a taste for rice is just inaccurate. Those who accuse us of creating dependency should ask themselves: what would have happened if the assistance were not there?

Food security is a complex issue. How do you get the message out?
 Because of our work and our advocacy, there is a better understanding that food insecurity is a big issue here. We've also empowered people to think of food as something they are entitled to. The gap is in moving beyond the simple idea that there is a problem to the sources of the problem, and specifically to what government could do to improve agricultural policies.

Often funding decisions have little to do with the situation on the ground, and do not incorporate input from beneficiaries.
 There can be a gap, but most of the time there is communication between the in-country staff and headquarters, who interact with the beneficiary government and donor governments respectively. There might be more or less sensitivity depending on the national politics of donor countries. Once the overall envelope of aid is decided on, there is competition among development agencies. We also help the public advocate for themselves through our community interactions on the ground. We can to an extent act as their loudspeaker.

You've come to Nepal in something of a 'bust' period, following the boom of expanded funding. How is it to work in such a situation?
 It's a bad situation, even though the dimensions of the cuts here are still up in the air. I've seen this problem before, when the faucet of aid begins



BIKRAM RAI

to trickle, for example in the Great Lakes crisis of the 1990s. The only thing to do is to keep advocating and make the best decisions on how best to scale down. The donors don't disagree, they also face this dilemma.

Will food assistance for Nepal continue to decrease?
 Upscaling will happen in the event of disasters like an earthquake, or a conflict, but of course no one would wish for that.

Any positives you can take out of this?

It forces us to fine-tune our targeting and analytic capacity, and review our approaches. This might involve programs clustered around synergies with other health and education programs, with the possibility of expansion in case of shocks. Whether we manage to reach all the people in need or not, we will certainly continue to advocate for them and this is also our role.

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Sky-diving over Baluwatar (parachutes optional)

Nepal has now broken the Guinness World Record by becoming the country with the most attempts to break world records in all kinds of disciplines. Our tourism planners, in their wisdom, have determined that any publicity is good publicity and have deployed Nepalis with extraordinary skills to the service of the nation. Nepal, after all, has the world's tallest mountain, the world's shortest man, the world's fastest clock, and the **zaniest headline writers** in the world.



Comes word from Aurora, Colorado, (and this is not a delayed April Fool's prank) that Deepak Sharma Bajgain, the 2011 Nepal Tourism Goodwill Ambassador, at the behest of the Global Lynx Foundation (go ahead, google it) successfully smashed two world records for 'Most Grapes Eaten In Three Minutes' (180) and 'Most Envelopes Torn in Half in 30 Seconds' (44). As reported by the Aurora Sentinel. Bajgain trashed the previous record for most **grapes** eaten in three minutes (172) held by American Ashrita Furman and the most **envelopes** torn in half by German Christian Shafer. **Yes, the Nepali can!** With goodwill



ambassadors like Bajgain, there is no doubt in my mind that this country can meet its MDG target of eliminating hunger by 2015 as well as entice 1 million tourists to visit Nepal in 2011. He has done the country proud and shown what we are capable of. OK, the prime minister may not have been able to complete his cabinet more than two months since his appointment, and we probably won't be able to complete our constitution in time, and our international airport may look like a godown, but hey, we have people in this country who are in the Guinness Book for breaking the world record for reading aloud for 113 hours straight, playing **table tennis** for four hours straight, and eating 34 **cloves of garlic** in one minute (burp).



Nepal's karmacharis have shown the way by refusing to sit around twiddling their thumbs while the governing party and its coalition partners go rafting. If the **civil servants** have launched their own expedition to Mt Everest, can **civil society** be far behind? And the big question is: can Rameswor Khanal make it to the summit team? And what's with the commies suddenly all going **shooting the rapids**? No sooner had Oli-Nepal taken up the paddles from Fisling to Kurintar last week, comrades from the Unfed Marx-bad, Lenin-bad Mao-bad also piled into three micros and headed off to the white waters of the Bhote Kosi. I know where all this is leading to:

- 3-Party Summit on Sagarmatha To Sign 8-Pt Pact
- Sky-diving Over Baluwatar (parachutes optional)
- Kiran Faction Tattoo Fundraiser
- 22-Party New Year Party in Party Palace
- Eat-All-You-Can Coalition Competition
- Ministers vs Secretaries Wrestling Semi-Finals
- Maobaddie Boxing Knock-Out Tournament
- YCL-PLA Cantonment Clean-Up Expedition
- Inter-Party Dandi Bew Challenge
- Intra-Party Back Stabbing Quarter-finals
- All-Potty Crap-Shooting Championships



And the real story behind the **Purna** and **Purak** bud-jet is that the Baddies wanted a Purak so they could pocket a cool Rs 9 billion in supplementary cash to fill up their war chest. Now that the cabinet has taken the decision to pass a full budget, it still doesn't solve the problem of spending the dam money in the next three months.

We shouldn't be blaming poor **Jhal Gnat** for being unable to complete his

cabinet. That is unfair. He has done his bit and got his party's nominees into government even though one minister with five portfolios can only spend one day a week in the towel-draped chair of each ministry he holds to sip tea and sign papers. No, the real problem is within the Baddies, they went back to the jungle in Sukute for old time's sake just so they could finalise their list for ministerships. But alas, candidates from all three factions cancelled each other out. Zilch also with Upadro Yadav, who desperately wants Phoren so he can spend three weeks in a month out of Nepal like he did in his last stint. But there are others in his party who think it's their turn to earn air miles.



The mule's mole in Singha Darbar says the cabinet deadlock will soon be resolved. The real problem was there weren't enough SUVs for the new ministers, which was delaying the announcement. Now that Sam Rat has handed over UNMIN's Indian-donated **Scorpions** to the Nepal govt, the cabinet will be complete in a jiffy.





उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्कमा

आर्थिक खबर

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